Bob Greene

They speak praise

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U.S. ATTY. GEN. RICHARD
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Men of the law have the ability to inspire awe in a nation. Their very names conjure up an image of breathtaking respect: Oliver Wendell Holmes. Felix Frankfurter. Clarence Darrow. John Marshall. Louis Brandeis. Abraham Lincoln. So when it was announced that the country's No. 1 lawman, the Fabalous Kleindienst himself, was coming to town, it seemed like too historic an opportunity to pass up.

The word was out that Kleindienst would talk. The last time I saw him, he hadn't been doing too much talking. That was back in August, and he had been swaying his hips softly to a Polynesian tune. This had been at the Playboy Plaza in Miami Beach, at a Hawaiian Luau Party given by W. Clement Stone. Kleindienst had been a guest at the Luau, and he had been infected with the band's tropical beat.

THERE WAS NO MUSIC in the Federal Building conference room on Monday when Kleindienst walked in. But he was full of the same "Four More Years" spirit that had been so prevalent at the luau.

"I'm very glad to be here as Attorney General of the United States," Kleindienst said. "And I would say that our basic programs and priorities for the next four years will be pretty much what they have been for the last four years."

All over the country, whoops of joy could be heard from blacks, poor people, reporters and other minorities who have been so compassionately served by the Consciousness III Justice Department of the Nixon administration.

Kleindienst then announced that the Justice Department under President Nixon had taken monumental steps in the furtherance of civil rights. "Then why is every civil rights leader in the country against President Nixon?" someone asked.

"Not all civil rights leaders," Kleindienst said. "Just those who identify themselves with the Democratic Party."

IN CASE ANYONE was harboring any illusions that, in these Second Four Years of the Nixon administration, there was a dangerous and depressing situation of poverty in the United States, Kleindienst reminded his audience that we live in "a society that has conferred upon you and me the highest standard of living that anyone has ever known in the history of civilization." And then he smiled.

Kleindienst kept hooking his thumbs in his vest pockets, and leaning back confidently, like an old Thomas Nast cartoon of Boss Tweed. He is a famous public official, and yet he could get on a random commercial airline flight and no one would recognize his face. He is the prototypical Nixon administration man: smug and effective and vaguely mean-spirited, but not colorfully so, not so much that he carries any real, fleshed-out, personal image.

He sounded as if he had not heard the rumors that his boss had been re-elected on Nov. 7. He sounded as if he were making a campaign speech. He kept praising the President and denigrating ohtre administrations, and, in 1973, taking shots at Ramsey Clark.

GEN. KLEINDIENST was not the only American Hero present in the Federal Building Monday. Upstairs, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, retired Army chief of staff, was testifying as a character witness in the trial of former Gov. Otto Kerner.

Westmoreland was supposed to have been to Vietnam what George Patton was to World War II. But it's doubtful that they will be

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